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Al Haig gets his chance to be in charge

FINALLY. President Alexander Haig.

Back in 1981, when Ronald Reagan was shot, then-Secretary of State Haig made his famous "I'm in charge here" comment, after running through the order of presidential succession on national TV.

In *The Military and the News Media*, a TV series to be aired over PBS, Haig gets to be President — or at least to play the part.

On the show, Haig, ex-CIA head William Colby, former Defense Secretary James Schlesinger and others debate what to do in various hypothetical national calamities — such as the invasion of a fictional Central American nation called "Sierra Madre."

The program's moderator, Harvard Law prof Charles Nesson, makes a veiled allusion to Haig's eyebrow-raising remark when he calls him "a take-charge kind of guy."

And, as a matter of fact, on this show he does take charge.

The other major government figures participating in the panel play themselves, as do the members of the press who took part, including CBS correspondent Dan Schorr, the *Washington Post's* Meg Greenfield, and Jack Nelson of the *L.A. Times*.

The focus of the discussion is the public — and how well it should be informed during an international crisis.

The three-part series consists of 90-minute segments from a weekend conference sponsored by Columbia University at Princeton University last month.

The round-table discussions, filmed before a live audience, "get pretty heated and passionate," said a program spokesman.

The participants get most testy, he said, dur-

ing discussions about longterm American involvement in overseas military conflicts, such as Vietnam — which in real life involved many of the panel's 22 players.

Already, one of the panel's make-believe situations has come true — which has led PBS to choose "A Matter of Intelligence" as the first segment of the series to air, on Jan. 22.

That program involves NASA and the launching of a militarily equipped space shuttle. Right after the debates took place early last month, news of such a real-life space mission leaked to the press — much to the consternation of Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger.

"We were rather surprised," admitted PBS' Kevin Moriarty. "The satellite we discussed was meant as a metaphor."

NASA is scheduled to launch its capsule with a military payload on Jan. 23.